A3 cont'd

an opening in the dielectric layer; and

selectively etching the semiconductor substrate through the opening in the dielectric layer.

Claim 9. (Amended) A method for fabricating a semiconductor device having a dielectric stack over a major surface thereof, comprising the steps of:

depositing a metallic germanium layer over the dielectric stack;

patterning the metallic germanium layer to form a germanium hard mask over the dielectric stack;

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etching the dielectric stack through germanium hard mask to form a dielectric hard mask over the major surface of the semiconductor substrate;

etching the semiconductor substrate through the dielectric hard mask;

forming doped regions in the semiconductor substrate; and

forming dielectric and conductive structures over the semiconductor substrate.

Claim 15. (Amended) A method for etching a semiconductor wafer, the semiconductor wafer having a dielectric stack over a major surface thereof, the method comprising the steps of:

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forming a germanium hard mask over the dielectric stack;

etching the dielectric stack through germanium hard mask to form a dielectric hard mask over the major surface of the semiconductor wafer; and

etching the semiconductor wafer through the dielectric hard mask.

Please add new claim 21 to recite as follows:

Claim 21. (New) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the step of patterning the layer of metallic germanium comprises:

depositing a layer of photo resist;

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etching the metallic germanium layer through the layer of photo resist; and